

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5799

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

COMNAVTEL PRIORITY

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA PRIORITY

NAVCOMSTA NEA MAKRI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 9561

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJ: CISCO TWO: RETRANSMISSION OF AP STORY

REF: STATE 186796 (NOTAL)

THERE FOLLOWS TEXT OF AP STORY CITED ADDIS 9463 IN ACCORDANCE WITH DEPT'S REQUEST (REFTEL). QUOTE: KIDNAP: BY FAROUK NASSAR. BEIRUT, LEBANON (AP) -- AN ERITREAN GUERRILLA LEADER SAID WEDNESDAY HE IS TRYING TO SECURE THE RELEASE OF TWO AMERICAN TECHNICIANS KIDNAPPED THREE WEEKS AGO BY SECESSIONIST REBELS IN ETHIOPIA'S RED SEA PROVINCE. OSMAN SALEH SABBI, WHO HEADS THE ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT'S POPULAR LIBERATION FORCES, ANNOUNCED THAT HE IS BRINGING PRESSURE ON ANOTHER ERITREAN GUERRILLA FACTION TO FREE THE TWO AMERICANS. THE ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ABDUCTION JULY 14 OF STEVE CAMPBELL AND JIM HARRELL, WHO WORKED AS CIVILIAN TECHNICIANS AT THE

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U.S. MILITARY COMMUNICATIONS FACILITY IN ASMARA, THE PROVINCIAL

CAPITAL OF ERITREA. THE GROUP MADE NO PUBLIC RANSOM DEMANDS BUT SAID THE KIDNAP WAS FOR "SECURITY REASONS" THAT REMAINED UNEXPLAINED. "WE ARE PRESSING THE OTHER FACTION TO SET THE TWO AMERICANS FREE BECAUSE THE ERITREAN REBELLION SHOULD RENOUNCE REPRISALS AGAINST INNOCENT FOREIGNERS IN ERITREA," SABBI SAID. HE ADDED THAT HE WOULD PROPOSE A POLICY OF "NO MORE KIDNAPPINGS, WHETHER THEY ARE AMERICANS OR ITALIANS," IN RECONCILIATION TALKS BETWEEN THE TWO RIVAL ELF FACTIONS SCHEDULED ON THE SUDAN BORDER LATER THIS MONTH. ERITREA IS A FORMER ITALIAN COLONY WITH A LARGE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY. SO FAR THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL FACTION HAS NOT RESPONDED TO SABBI'S ATTEMPTS TO GET THE TWO AMERICANS FREED. BOTH MEN WORKED FOR THE US-BASED COLLINGS INTERNATIONAL SERVICE COMPANY, A GOVERNMENT CONTRACTOR. IT WAS THE SECOND KIDNAPPING OF AMERICANS IN ERITREA. LAST YEAR, TWO AMERICAN EMPLOYEES OF THE TENNECO OIL COMPANY WERE HELD FOR THREE MONTHS BEFORE THE OIL COMPANY PAID A RANSOM FOR THEIR RELEASE. THE AMOUNT PAID WAS UNOFFICIALLY REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN 1.5 MILLION DOLLARS. ERITREAN SOURCES HERE SAY THE REVOLUTIONAL COUNCIL FACTION HAS MADE A SECRET RANSOM DEMAND OF 5 MILLION DOLLARS TO THE U.S. COMMUNICATIONS FACILITY IN ASMARA TO RELEASE THE TWO AMERICAN TECHNICIANS. "THE UNITED STATES SHOULD NOT BE INTIMIDATED INTO GREATER ANIMOSITY AGAINST THE ERITREAN REBELLION," SABBI TOLD A NEWS CONFERENCE LATER WEDNESDAY. "TRUE, THE AMERICANS RECENTLY AIRLIFTED ARMS FROM WEST GERMANY DIRECTLY TO ETHIOPIAN ARMY GARRISON IN ASMARA. BUT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS CAUTIOUS IN ITS DEALINGS WITH THE ETHIOPIAN MILITARY REGIME AND WE SHOULD TRY TO MINIMIZE THESE DEALINGS RATHER THAN ENHANCE THEM BY RASH ACTS," HE ADDED. SABBI CLAIMED THE ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT'S 14-YEAR-OLD REBELLION WAS "NEARING THE POINT OF FINAL VICTORY. IT HAS BEATEN BACK A MAJOR ETHIOPIAN ARMY OFFENSIVE TO PENETRATE THE ERITREAN LIBERATED COUNTRYSIDE." IN 20 MAJOR BATTLES DURING THE LAST TWO WEEKS, HE SAID, ETHIOPIAN FORCES SUFFERED MORE THAN 1,000 CASUALTIES IN ERITREA, LOST ONE TANK AND 43 PERSONNEL CARRIERS. TWO F5 FIGHTER PLANES WERE ALSO SHOT DOWN BY RUSSIAN MADE ANTI (ONE LINE GARBLED). SABBI RECENTLY DISCLOSED IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE ASSO- CIATED PRESS THE ELF WAS GETTING ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS AND MISSILES FROM LIBYA AND IRAQ. "BUT WE ARE PRESSING FOR A COMPLETE AIR DEFENCE SYSTEM TO DEFEND ASMARA AND OTHER MAJOR

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ERITREAN CITIES BEFORE LAUNCHING OUR FINAL LIBERATION OFFENSIVE. ELF VICTORIES DROVE ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES INTO COMMITTING BARBARIC ATROCITIES IN SEVERAL ERITREAN TOWNS. HE CLAIMED 412 ERITREAN CIVILIANS WERE KILLED IN THE TOWN OF ASWA. MOST OF THE VICTIMS WERE TEACHERS, ENGINEERS AND FARMERS, HE SAID. IN ASMARA, SABBI SAID, 42 STUDENTS WERE SUMMARILY EXECUTED IN TWO WEEKS. HE CALLED ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO INTERFERE AGAINST "THESE HEINOUS, ATROCIOUS

ACTS." (END) 1023G 06 AUG 75 END QUOTE.

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